

applied to his own work, ^a "Madame Bovary," in his anger and weariness at being incessantly complimented on it. For the rest, Zola tells us that the company "rattled through every subject, always reverting to literature, to the book or the play of the hour, or to some general question or venture-some theory; but, at the same time, excursions were made into every field, and neither men nor things were spared. Flaubert thundered, Tourgenieff told stories of exquisite originality and savour, Goncourt pronounced judgment on one matter and another with all his shrewdness and personal style of phraseology. Then Daudet acted his anecdotes in that charming manner of his, which made him the best of companions; while as for myself I did not shine at all, for I am a very poor conversationalist, and only worth anything when I feel a deep conviction on some subject, and fly into a passion."

To some of the aforementioned gatherings and dinners it will be necessary to refer again in the course of this narrative. What has been set down here will, however, indicate the nature of the companionship which came to Zola as he toiled along the path leading to success. He had not shaken off his old friends, he still gave his weekly dinners which one or another — Alexis, Marius

Roux, Coste,
Duranty, and Beliard, the painter, — attended,
though some
began to fall out of the ranks, carried hither
and thither
by their private interests. Meantime, he
worked very
zealously. In 1874, he completed his story, " La
Conqu\$te
de Plassans," — the fourth volume of the
Rougon-Macquart
series — and ran it through " Le Siecle " as a
serial. When
it was published, soon afterwards, in volume
form by
Oharpentier, there was a sufficient demand
to justify the